

L I T E R A R Y M A G A Z I N E



prism

SPRING
2
THOUSAND

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staff

Faculty Advisors: Dr. Charles Duncan, Woody Holliman
Editor: Stacy Johnson
Photography: Ashley Farland
Graphic Design: Ashley Farland
Assistant Editors: Melissa Edmonston, Christy Fipps



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A large, thick, brown stylized letter 'C' that frames the title. The letter is composed of two main curved segments. The word 'CONTRIBUTORS' is written in a brown, serif, all-caps font across the middle of the 'C'.

CONTRIBUTORS

Professor Emerita Sally Buckner

Brittany Allen

Carrie Bolte

Elizabeth Cloud

Rebekah Costin

Kathryn Cox

Stacy Johnson

Xiomara Shepard

Amber Sauer

Laundry

Sally Buckner

That Friday Daddy brought the Maytag home,
his grin spreading wide as its wringers,
Mama like to've had a fit. Were they rich?
Had she complained? Hadn't she managed so far
with ways she'd known since childhood on the farm
where, before he'd hand it to a merchant,
Grandpa'd squeezed each penny until Lincoln
proclaimed once more the Gettysburg Address?

It was easier now—spilled water from a spigot,
though she remembered how to fill a pot
with water drawn from wells or toted up
a wearying hill from the spring near the
bottom-land.
She could do it in her sleep: heat the
water
over a backyard fire built while bacon
sang its sizzling song on the wood-fired
range;
add soap contrived from lye and saved-up
grease;
swirl clothes and linens with a skinny pole
in thin grey suds, then rinse and wring with hands
and arms grown wrestler-strong from plowing,
hoeing, tugging weeds, slaughtering
hogs and chickens, shoveling manure;
finally hang each piece to dance on lines
stretched twenty sun-lit feet from porch to post.

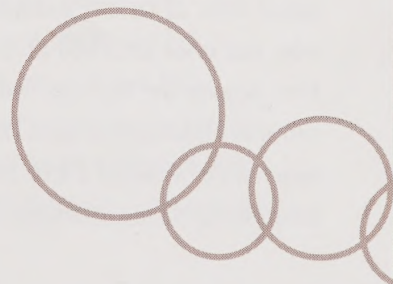
Within weeks she admitted she'd relinquish

her Beautyrest sooner than the Maytag
firmly ensconced on the screened-in porch
next to a sink Daddy had installed.
It made life simpler, she allowed, provided
more time to work the garden, wax the floors,
can the summer's produce. More time,

Daddy said, to sit out front and catch
the evening breeze, to drink cool lemonade,
watch the children chasing lightning-bugs,
or, in rain or cold, turn on the Philco,
listen to I love a Mystery,
laugh together at Lum and Abner's antics.

Already Mama had replaced the rough
black iron she'd heated on the stove,
bought General Electric—steady warmth,
sleek surface, considerably less heft.
But when she plugged it in, she would recall
how Grandpa'd always scorned the work of women,
claimed they didn't know what labor was.
She ironed, not only Daddy's stiff-starched shirts,
his tough trousers worn each working day,
not just our schoolday skirts and lace-trimmed blouses,
her weekday cotton prints and Sunday best,
but sheets and towels, dishrags, underwear—
everything except our socks and sweaters.

As the heap in the laundry cart diminished,
Mama measured worth in the cloth
stacked into a tall, clean tower,
folded, soft, warm, and countable.



taking a

chance

Stacy Johnson

Simple things can sometimes fill in the emptiness left in our lives. Gail Godwin, a renowned novelist and a graduate of Peace College, depicts her life changes as a series of events in which people gave her reason to continue in the game of life.

Although she was salutatorian of her graduating high school class, she had no plans of furthering her education due to a lack of financial stability. After a long absence, her father reentered her life on graduation day, however, and vowed that she would go to college, just as he and her mother had. This was Godwin's first chance at a future, and it was given her by a man who had been absent much of her life.

It was a hot August day when Godwin and her father visited colleges in Raleigh, including St. Mary's, Meredith, and Peace. Godwin had dreams of attending University of North Carolina but her acceptance as a first-year student would be impossible due to her gender. She and her father first toured St. Mary's because she was raised in the Episcopal Church and it would be fitting that she attend a college under the same affiliation. But fate wouldn't have it; St. Mary's offered her only a spot on the waiting list - she didn't have her high school transcript and it was August. With heads bent, she and her father left St. Mary's and headed to Peace College. Little did she know the impact Peace would have on her life.

Her life took a direct U-turn upon entering the office of the President of Peace College, Dr. Pressley, who immediately made the father and daughter feel at ease when he suggested that he and her father take off their suit coats to offset the steamy weather invading the office. Dr. Pressley soon began to center the conversation around Gail, which made her feel comfortable and reassured her that she was indeed suitable for college life and the demands of such a dream. Dr. Pressley seemed unconcerned by the fact that she did not have her high school transcript; he trusted her word. Before Gail and her father left the corridors of Main, he said, "I hope you decide to come to Peace." Dr. Pressley was a man of miracles, you might say, with his honest table talk and an understanding of women who wish to better themselves through education. As she and her father drove away from the campus, they looked back on the white columns supporting the magnificent building that would soon give birth to her talent of writing. Upon leaving Peace College in 1957, she received a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from the University of North Carolina and later earned her Master of Arts and a doctorate in English from the University of Iowa. All this and more because Dr. Pressley gave her a chance.

Godwin used her experiences at Peace College to build her work in the literary field. Her first published work of fiction, published in the *North American Review*, had a plot based on a Scottish minister who had once preached at one of the many Peace College chapels. This subject seemed important at the time despite the fact she had, during this time, lost the religious faith that had carried through her hard times in childhood, a faith she would not recover until much later in life. Nevertheless, this preacher inspired the work of a true lover of the language. Her art of fiction and her love of the craft of writing have captured the attention of readers and encouraged her stream of creativity to continue. Because the

world gave a lady from the South a chance to succeed in the competitive field of literature, she has written ten novels and is currently working on her first work of non-fiction.

Gail Godwin fills her fictional world with characters that resemble your next door neighbor or your childhood playmate, yet the happiness and optimism expressed in her books did not always reflect her own heart. Godwin once received a blue porcelain vase full of pansies from a friend; it should have brought some beauty into her life, but the vase had lately turned dull and gray. Thinking about this gift prompted Godwin to embrace each morning with a solitary walk around the grounds of her house with her cat, Amirose. They begin each day with a quiet morning walk, as Godwin gathers wild flowers to illuminate that vase, which now sits on the windowsill of her study, while Amirose walks patiently beside her. They pause at the site where Felix, Amirose's brother, is buried; there, Godwin reflects on the past experiences with their friend, and she remembers how she had not treasured the little things, such as morning walks to gather flowers. The sincerity in Godwin's voice when describing the way Amirose curls-up on her chest in such a way that their heartbeats begin to pound to the same rhythmic pattern shows her dedication to her furry companion and to the simple things in life. The flowers remind her of the chance she was given to enjoy living and Amirose gives her reason to live.

Gail Godwin is a woman of chances. Angels have followed her throughout her life in order that she may receive its gifts to the fullest extreme. Miracles work in strange ways — a father reentering your life so that the opportunity of a higher education is available or a talk with someone who regards you as trustworthy. Or maybe just a simple flower arrangement making you ponder the way you live your life. Godwin has had all of these encounters and more. Her life is not about taking chances or risks but knowing that you are given chances to go further; sometimes you just need a little extra help.

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hammock babies

Amber Sauer

Tuck, fold

Tuck, fold

Silently their swaddled chests rise and fall
As the soothing green April breeze
Gently rocks the woven hammock.

Tuck, fold

Tuck, fold

Bronzed faces calm as the Gulf
Relaxed sweet as corn,
All four tucked in deep folds,
Sink into satisfied sleep.



This poem was selected for the 2000
Penny Poetry Award, which is given for
the most outstanding work of poetry
by a Peace Student.

Continuum

Stacy Johnson

Interstate 85 carries the forgotten wind
As flighty heels drag depth
Into blackened coarse asphalt
Slabs; bleeding octagons
Direct the driver, head bent,
To circle silently
Maneuvering desolate
Highways; hesitant blinks
Yellow, forcing eyes to clear
Moist droplets from wrinkles
Of harsh climates and deathly
Chills that sliced through the breeze
Forgiving -- U-Turn Must Yield --
Interstate 85 carries the forgotten wind.

Sarasota Sunset

kathryn Cox

Hot misty heavy air
Warms me
As I watch the Sarasota sun go to bed again.
Sand-scorched feet,
Buried
In powdered sugar.
A cheap chair leaves its mark -
Imprinted squares on my legs.

The sun goes to sleep unquietly:
Reds and oranges and purples and blues
Vie and die.

We're at the edge of the world
And the sun slipped back into its fold.

Best Day

Thank you, warmness, Dread,
You, after-prom bomb,
Flop like a wet pancake on my spleen
Dare me to scream

Brittany Allen

Bust out
Escape
spite fresh mascara
Pour release to cheeks, lips, chin

Hold out until
Whatever's better flows through my throat
Or will I die before I speak?

Would I forget
Not for turkeys making sense
Of the hole in my head

-true happiness

SPIDER

Another noiseless
Patient

SPIDER

Rebekah Costin

"A noiseless patient spider"
Clings amid dust to the fiery sill.
Harsh cold light burns and needles
and blanches its pale form still whiter.

A hapless, hopeless victim writhes,
trapped by the brutish sun-
so partial in illumination.
The spider moves in.

f o r t y t h a t

Xiomara Shepard

This girlchild was born as usual
tortured night by night by fashion.

Can she see past fame and fortune
Past the river of shackles?
Cluttered thoughts of fashion dented
by a colloidal scope of feeling.

This girlchild was born as usual
to me, to her, to you. Yet she has
never been anywhere besides Raleigh
Fashion.

Caught up in wonder,
She has never ventured, explored,
or left Dixie.

The sunning warmth tortured her.
"I have to see the world," she said one day.
"I'll pack my bags and forget about the
girlchild who was born as usual."

That day she left it all behind, the girl,
the child, and her southern style.



the waiting room

Carrie Bolte

Cookie cutter
couches
stiffly plush and
disconcerting,
pillows too soft
and
scratchy blankets -
pass
Minutes,
hours,
days.

The Minutes rule -
no certainty for hours
no patience for seconds -
they dictate
all.

Clocks
raised to
increased scrutiny:
waiting
the hand
as it sweeps
ever slowly
toward the
change of
hour,
chance of
News -
Anything for



a
word. . .

means of
distraction-
playing cards,
magazines,
sleep -
are abandoned
without reservation
to follow hopeful
sounds
of
familiar steps
down an
echoing empty
hall.

Separation -
doors bar
entrance,
prohibit contact . . .
longing for the touch of
the weathered, aged
hand that
has passed
foreheads and
pressed
faces in
gentle days
past.

Waiting is hell.

sunday afternoon

Carrie Bolte

"This really is ridiculous, you know."

He was sitting there, in his big brown chair and worn gray sweatpants. I was interrupting - it was important. He looked over at me funny. It was the middle of the game and, from the look on his face, he anticipated an attack.

"What?" His voice sounded hard, even distant.

"I can't think of a single thing to write about. And tomorrow is my class. This is so frustrating!"

He sighed. This was an on-going problem. In fact, I'd been sitting there for hours in front of the blank blue screen. Unfortunately for him, the computer was in the living room with the t.v. "I thought you had an idea." He seemed slightly irritated and turned back to the t.v. I couldn't blame him, could I? After all, it was the Redskins and the Cowboys. Maybe he'd have a brilliant idea for me.

"I did have an idea. And it was a good idea. But when I tried to write it, it sounded like crap. I need an idea, David. Help me out."

"Hmm." I could tell he wasn't listening. I turned in my chair to face him. He didn't notice. I sat there for a few minutes, just watching him. He never noticed.

"Yeah, the idea I had was pretty good. I was writing about you and me and how we never talk unless you want to. Oh, and about how you're a terrible kisser."

He was involved in the game. So was I.

"Yeah, and I tried to write about our first anniversary, when you gave me season tickets to the Raiders, but I just couldn't put into words how irritated I was. I think something like that is indescribable, don't you?"

"Hmm." He was watching an instant replay.

"Yeah, so I decided that I would leave you forever."

The television droned on incessantly. He, although still caught up in the game, looked up briefly, and I stared back at him. He smiled and turned back to the screen.

"Sounds like a good idea, hon. That'll make a great story, I'm sure."

I got up and stood in the doorway. "It sure will."

The bags lined the hall when I entered, standing straight and tall as if waiting for a command to march. I smiled at their order - everything should be tidy in one's home. I picked up the mail, listlessly piled on the hall table, and found him in the kitchen, writing a note on the back of a receipt. I think he was glad to see me - I know I was glad to see him.

"Hi sweetie. How was work?" My voice was bright. The magazine I subscribed to had an article called "How to Make Your Man Feel Welcome," and I tried to incorporate its advice. Since then, he seemed more at ease every night when he came home.

"I'm leaving, Meredith," he said quietly, without looking up.

"Going on a business trip?" He'd never traveled before, but I supposed stranger things could happen.

He looked up at me. "Are you kidding?" I met his eyes. He looked...what was that look? I looked back down at the mail.

He continued. "I'm leaving, Meredith. As in leaving."

I looked back up from the stack of bills and magazines - oh, good, it came today - and smiled. "Okay. When will you be back? Do you need a ride anywhere?"

He shook his head, sighed loudly, and stood up.

"Look at you! You don't care! You're just sitting there, thumbing through those stupid magazines and a bunch of bills. I'm leaving you. Leaving - as in I never want to see you again. As in I'm not interested in spending the rest of my life trying to make you live yours. Do you understand anything I'm saying to you?"

I just looked at him. He couldn't mean it. Leaving? David would never leave me. And if he did...but no, I couldn't think about that. He kept talking.

"What happened to you? When did you stop living?"

He got up and headed toward the door.

"You can't really be leaving." My voice cracked a bit, and had a bit of a desperate quality that I'd never noticed before. I looked at him again. He was standing at the door, with the late afternoon light shining behind him. I'd never noticed how careworn his face had become, or how sad eyes were. I couldn't quite see my reflection in them.

"I can. And I am." He searched my face, as if to find some sign of comprehension. I just stared back at him.

"How can - why would - why?" I managed to say through the growing lump at the base of my throat. Breathing had become difficult too, and I felt some tears fall. I stared ahead, seeing him in a haze.

"You really don't understand, do you?" His voice was sad now, almost pitying. "How can I not leave? You use me as a crutch, as a way to get through your days. We don't even know each other anymore. I can't stand to watch you become someone completely foreign to me - I can't survive this life. I have to get out."

"But you love me. I know you love me. You said so. You said you did - you love me...don't you?" My tears had stopped for the moment, but the deep pit inside of my stomach was growing, swallowing every word he said.

"I love the person you were when I met you - strong, opinionated, loving. Where is that person?" He looked at me searchingly. "Where is she? I miss her so much...I love her. I really don't know who you are."

Picking up the bags, he walked out the door and I sighed. Straightening up the pile of mail on the kitchen table, I glanced at the clock. Time for dinner.

not quite perfect:

The Life of Lee Radziwill

Elizabeth Cloud

Imagine this: You are born into a wealthy family. When you are nineteen, you are named "Debutante of the Year." You star in a play, a television movie, and even get to host your own talk show. Your best friend, one of the most critically acclaimed authors of all time, writes a stage role especially for you. You are beautiful, repeatedly make the International Best-Dressed list, and you even marry a prince. Stories like this usually occur only in fairy tales. And yet, this is the life story of Lee Radziwill. Amazingly, however, she never really was able to enjoy this incredible life. Why? Because she was always outshined by the one person who could make even this life seem dull: her sister, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

John F. Kennedy's election as president in 1960 signaled a time of change for the country. For Lee Radziwill, his election signaled a different sort of change. For, until that point, she had always been considered wittier, prettier, and more likable than her older sister, Jackie. Even though Kennedy had been a well-known political figure for some time, his wife was quite reserved. She did not enjoy socializing like her sister Lee, whose (first) husband worked at the American Embassy in London, and was prominent on the international party circuit. Though Lee, too, was soft-spoken, she delighted in the attention she received, and did not often shy away from the spotlight as Jackie did.

But with her husband now holding the highest office in the land, Jackie became a constant focus of the press. Lee, who had always been considered the better-looking and better-dressed of the two, now found herself in unfamiliar territory: she was no longer the "special one." Lee's second husband claimed to be a Polish prince, but many people questioned the authenticity of his title. Regardless of whether or not Stas Radziwill was a genuine aristocrat, he certainly did not have the same cachet as John F. Kennedy. Thus, Lee could not rely on her husband to provide the admiration from others that she so desperately wanted. Unwilling to be overshadowed by her sister, she decided to carve out a niche of her own.

Lee felt she had an affinity for acting, and she made her stage debut in grand style. She starred in a production of *The Philadelphia Story*, playing the role Katherine Hepburn made famous in the film of the same name. Her best friend, Truman Capote, served as an advisor on the production. Capote was extremely devoted to Lee, going so far as to work with the direc-

tor to tailor the role to better suit Lee. He even went to rehearsals and coached her from the balcony, much to the annoyance of the rest of the cast. The play debuted in Chicago at the Ivanhoe Theatre on 20 June 1967. Although by all accounts she worked diligently and tried her best, her performance was not a critical success. She nevertheless attracted large crowds, but she was disappointed to discover that most of the people who had come to see her were primarily curious to see "Jackie's sister." The financial success of the production did lead to her starring in a television remake of the movie 'Laura.' This time, however, her performance was openly derided, effectively putting an end to her acting career.

Trying to put the embarrassment of her failure at acting behind her, Lee moved on to other areas that interested her. Having worked at Vogue when she was younger, she decided that perhaps she could make fashion a successful career choice. She became a fixture on the fashion scene, attending most of the couture shows in Paris and New York. She had an eye for clothes and supported Yves St. Laurent and Giorgio Armani early in their careers. Armani even paid her to be seen in public wearing his clothes. Yet for all the personal style Lee had, it was always Jackie who won the acclaim for her sophisticated taste. Indeed, few people realized that it was actually Lee who had first worn the boxy suits and pillbox hats that became the trademarks of her sister.

Searching for a creative outlet, Lee turned her attention back to the world of television. She hosted her own talk show, "Conversations with Lee Radziwill," and it aired in fifteen minute segments on the midday news. Although her guests included celebrity friends such as Rudolf Nureyev, Gloria Steinam, and Halston, the public showed little enthusiasm for the show. The program, in fact, was canceled after only six weeks.

In the eighties, Lee decided that her sense of style might serve her well in the field of interior design. She began by decorating the homes of a few close friends, eventually opening her own design firm. Lee soon discovered, however, that picking out sofas and running a business are two very different things. She was unprepared for the enormous amount of work that her new job required. In truth, she did not really want to concern herself with the mundane details of running a business. She quickly burned out on interior design, and she closed her business.

If Lee seemed to encounter problems in just about everything she attempted, her sister appeared to glide through her professional endeavors with ease and style. Jackie, of course, capitalized on her lifelong appreciation of literature by working as an editor at Viking Press. From the time she divorced Aristotle Onassis until her cancer made working impossible, Jackie remained committed to her job, earning the respect of the general public as well as her co-workers. She stood in glaring contrast to her well-intentioned but unfocused sister, who could never seem to find something at which she could succeed. Jackie's triumphs served only to

emphasize Lee's very public failures.

Lee Radziwill led a life that a lot of women would consider ideal: she was rich, beautiful, and well-liked by her many loyal friends. Yet because she was continually compared unfavorably with her older sister, she somehow seemed unfulfilled, even a failure. When the spotlight did shine on Lee, it was only to highlight her perceived inferiority to her beloved sister. And in the end, no matter what she did accomplish - which was not inconsiderable - she always remained "Jackie's sister." That's a difficult role to play, even for a princess.



This essay was selected for the 2000 Elizabeth Gibson Taylor Award, which is given for the most outstanding work of prose by a Peace Student.

C O L L E G E

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